

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

WLW
CINCINNATI

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

1:15
P.M. - E.S.T.

A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE

No. 186

"LONG GRASP"

November 15, 1941

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

VOICE

"E took it for granted that land was everlasting;

"e said ownership of the land insured security.

Tools would wear out, men would die --

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: ABRUPT DISCORD

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes "ashed away!

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER, fading behind...

ANNOUNCER

Those who have lived in the Southern Piedmont suffer recurrent attacks of a curious malady induced by the translucent haze which hangs over the Southern Alleghenies. This might be called Blue Ridge amnesia. The Southern Piedmont! Land of hills and valleys. Land of erosion and of gullies. Land where soil conservation practices are slowly beating back the insidious processes of soil wastage, of land abuse. In the heart of this historic and colorful region, near Greenville, South Carolina, in a little community once known as Possum Kingdom, is the scene of the 136th consecutive broadcast of Fortunes "ashed Away.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER

Our story today is told by Cleveland Rodgers. A man who should know that story.....(FADE)

NARRATOR

One of the marked symptoms of Blue Ridge amnesia is a tendency of the mind to travel backward for a full century before I was born. This extra century of memories I attribute entirely to Long Gramp, an ancient giant so called because of his tremendous height. He was six feet four and he lived exactly one hundred years--from 1800 to 1900.

ORGAN: BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS or something similar, fading for....

NARRATOR

I was happy when I clutched a bundle of extra clothing and climbed into a wagon seat beside my Uncle Ben to go to his farm in Possum Kingdom. He had offered me my first job. I was nine years old and expected to make lots of money picking cotton at 25 cents a hundred pounds. It was after dark when we reached the farm....(FADE)

SOUND: Clatter of dishes at supper table...door opens....

BEN

Cotton is goin' to five cents, I hear.

SOUND: Door closes...

GRAMP

Gosh a'mighty! I told you you was crazy to put in so much. Who's goin' to pick?

RODGERS

I'm goin' to help.

ESTELLE

Yes, Gramp, cousin Cleeve is going to try his hand at pickin'.

GRAMP (snorting)

Hin? Why he's just a little shaver!

RODGERS

I never picked before, Long Gramp, but I know I can help, a lot.

GRAMP (solemnly)

We all gotta pitch in.

FEI

You're too old, Gramp. You'll hafta mind the baby so's the women folks can help pick.

GRAMP (stamping off)

Too old, huh! Why, blast them!.....(FADE)

SOUND: Night noises...

GRAMP

Son, they think all I'm good for is mindin' the baby. I'd be the contentedest man in the world gettin' in crops, if they'd let me. I run this place nigh onto 70 years, and now I can't have my say.

SOUND: Spit of tobacco juice...

GRAMP (slapping)

Dag nab these mosquitoes!

RODGERS

Is it true, Gramp, that you're nearly a hundred years old?

GRAMP

Mighty nigh, I reckon. I was born in 1866--you figger it up.

RODGERS

See, I'll bet you remember lots of history; things like would help me in school.

GRAMP

Reckon I do, sonny. I recollect Greenville when it weren't no bigger than Honea Path. Guineas roostin' in trees in the streets, drappin' on ye; pigs runnin' all over.

RODGERS

Gosh, Gramp, Greenville is a big place now.

GRAMP

So I hear. Ain't been up yonder in 20 years. They say folks is thicker'n maggots thar nowadays, goin' all which away in the street; and when it comes rain they put umbrels over 'em and butt together and go right on. (LAUGHS)

RODGERS

That may seem funny to you Gramp, but that's just the way they do!

ESTELLE (off mike)

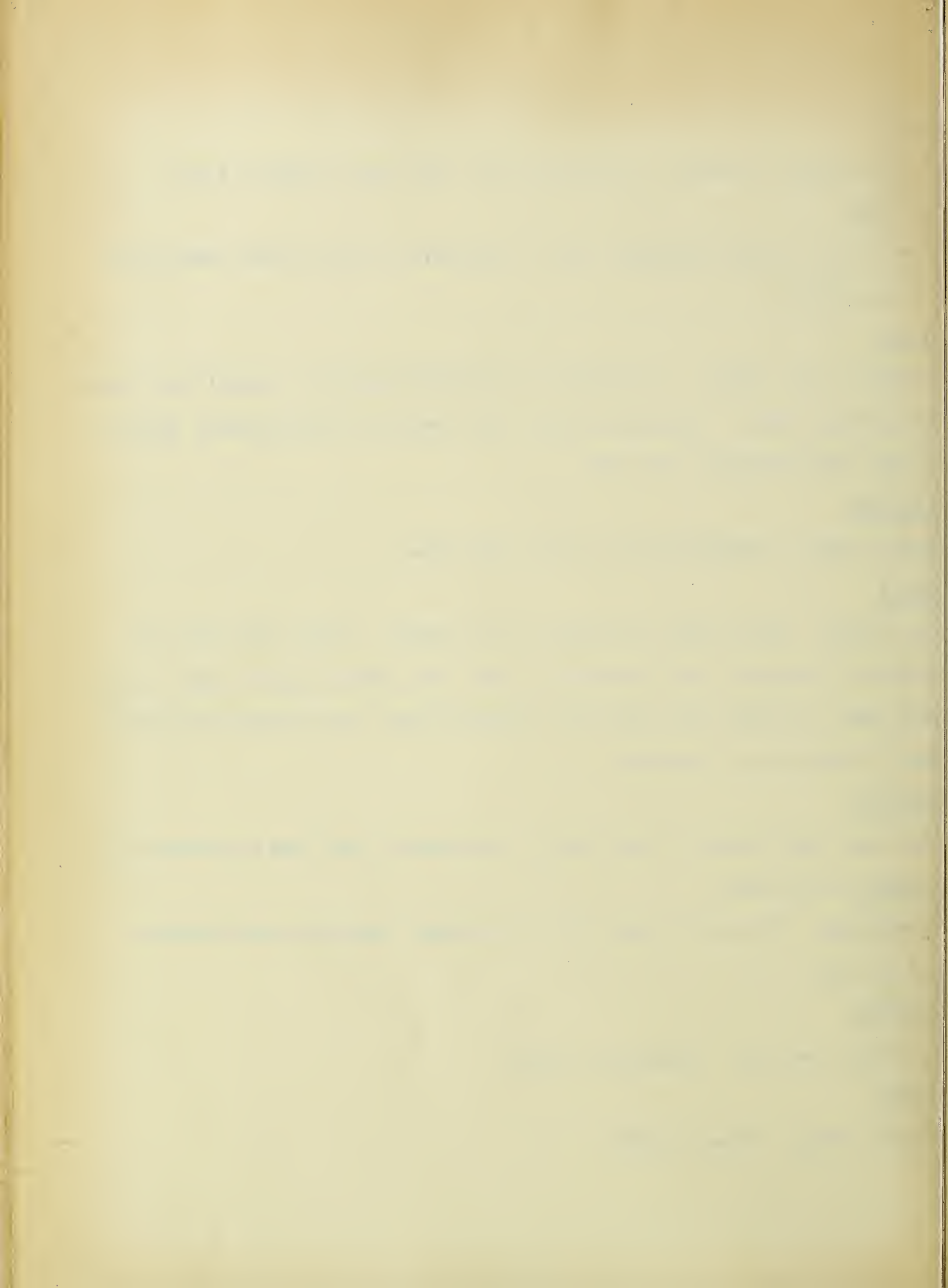
Cleveland! If you're going to pick cotton tomorrow you'd better get to bed.

RODGERS

Whatever you say. Goodnite, Gramp.

GRAMP

'Nite, sonny. Sleep tight.



NARRATOR (fading in)

I started picking cotton eagerly, that next morning, thinking of all the money I would make, but the sun was broiling. Before noon I was exhausted, and they made me stay in the shade awhile. My back seemed broken. Perspiration stung my eyes. The long rows of cotton seemed endless. Once, when I was picking near the house, Long Gramp came out to meet me, with the baby...(FADE)

GRAMP

How you doin', sonny?

RODGERS

Gee, Gramp, I don't think I can even pick a hundred pounds!

GRAMP

I wuz just like you. Young 'uns allus 'low they work by arms and legs. That ain't so, sonny.

RODGERS

But Gramp, how else can you do it?

GRAMP

You do it by your haid. Hands do jist what the head sez. You don't think 'bout pickin'. You jist say to the fingers, go on pickin'.

RODGERS

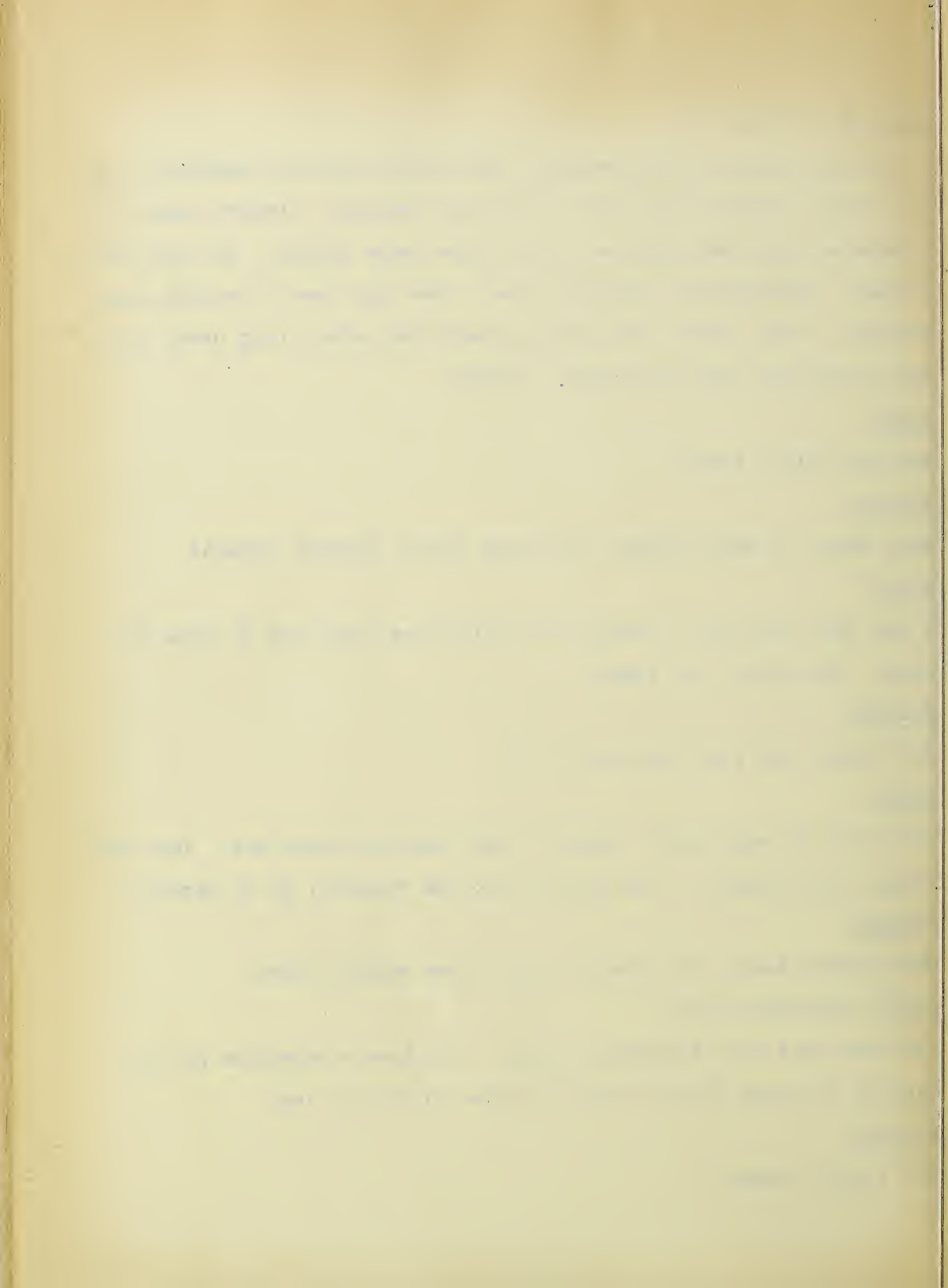
That sounds easy, but I don't think I can make it work.

GRAMP (confidentially)

Jist you wait till tomorrie, sonny. I'll have a surprise fer ye, back of the wood pile if ye'll promise to tell no one.

RODGERS

Oh, I won't Gramp.



GRAMP (muttering)

He mindin' the baby. All I'm good fer eh? I'll show 'em.

ORGAN: Brief bridge....

NARRATOR

Sure enough, that next afternoon when I was sweating again in the cotton field, far behind Uncle Ben and Cousin Estelle, I saw Gramp beckoning to me behind the wood pile. He brought out a big bag of cotton...(FADE)

GRAMP

I 'low'd I could do it. Here, chuck this in yer sack and don't be tellin' on me.

RODGERS

Gee, thanks, Gramp. This'll make me forget my aches.

ORGAN: Lively music....

NARRATOR

That night Long Gramp whispered that he had picked another batch of cotton and hidden it behind the barn. With this help I had over a hundred pounds. Uncle Ben and Cousin Estelle praised me. The next day, when we were all picking near the house...(FADE)

SOUND: Child's scream....

ESTELLE

That's the baby.

BEN

My Gawd. That's happened now!

SOUND: Running feet....

ESTELLE (hysterical)

Oh, the baby's been in the lye drip!

SOUND: Child crying and screaming...

BEN

Wash out his mouth, quick, Estelle!

GRAMP (fading in)

Whut in tarnation's wrong?

ESTELLE

Oh, you old fool, you've almost killed the baby, that's all!

BEN

What you doin' with that cotton sack, Gramp?

GRAMP (anxiously)

Jist helpin' the boy out a bit.

BEN (thundering)

Ain't you got good sense? Goin' off and leavin' the baby that way!

How'm I goin' to save the crop if Estelle can't help? Are you tryin' to make me lose every dollar I got?

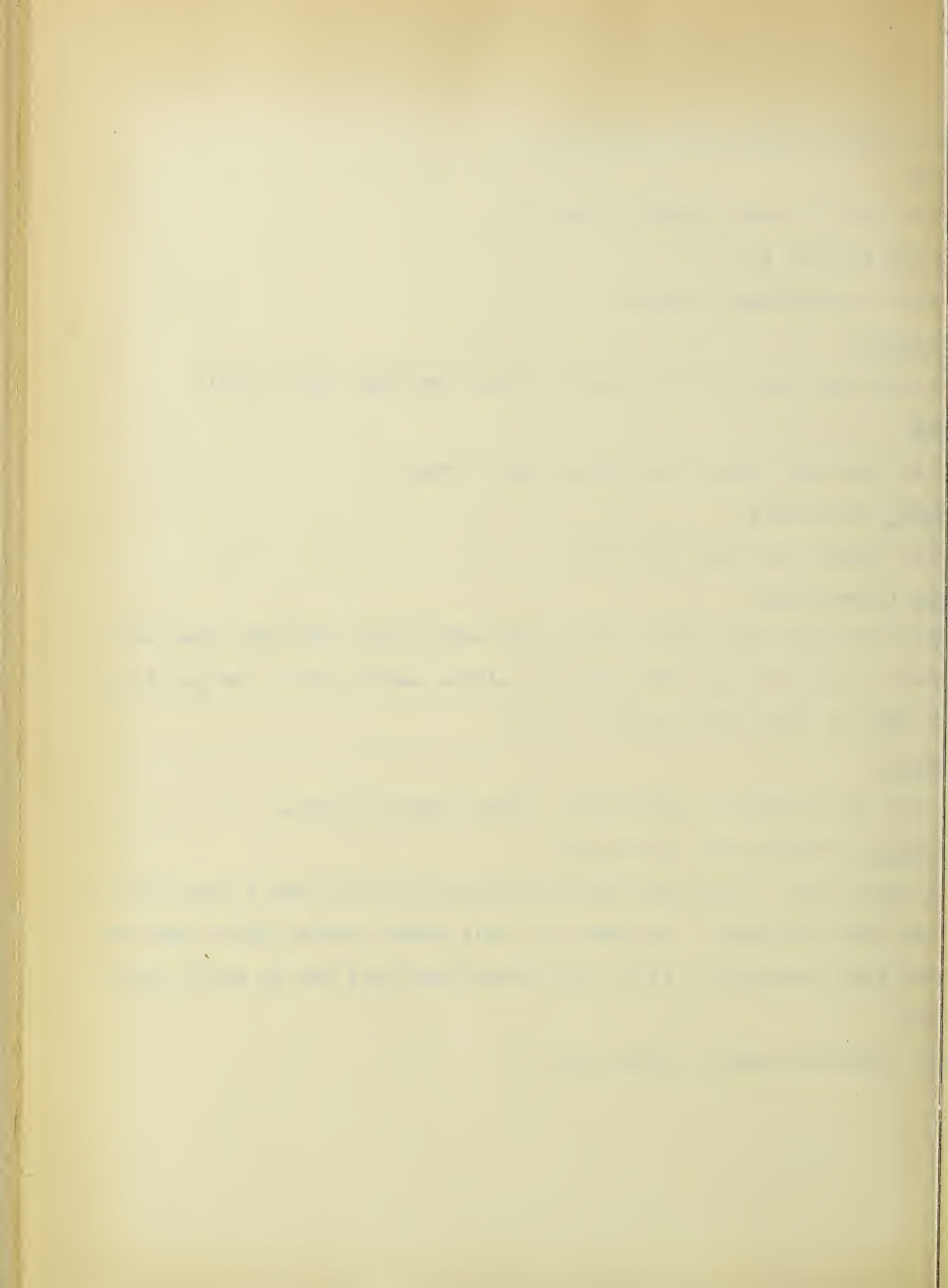
GRAMP

I was jist tryin' to help, Ben. Didn't mean no harm.

ESTELLE (calmer now, but angry)

No harm, huh? I can pick more cotton than you can but I can't if you don't mind the baby. You know the only chance Dad's got to keep the bank from foreclosin' is to pick every last boll and we can't get no help.

ORGAN: Mournful music, fading for...



NARRATOR

Long Gramp that night went upstairs as soon as he'd eaten. He hadn't said anything about the cotton he had picked that day and I couldn't find his bag. While Uncle Ben and Estelle were weighing the cotton by lantern light I sneaked up to the attic, where Gramp and I slept. There was only a thin partition between our rooms. As I neared the door to his room....(FADE)

SOUND: Scraping of chair, strangling throat noises...

SOUND: Door opens as.....

RODGERS

Gramp! Gramp! Don't do it. No! No!

SOUND: Running feet, scuffle, chair upsets....

GRAMP (gasping and groaning)

Leave me be!

RODGERS

No Gramp, you can't do it! You can't hang yourself!

GRAMP

Don't let 'em hear you. I'll be all right direc'ly.

RODGERS

I'll hide the rope, Gramp.

GRAMP

I wuz jist crazy mad. Don't tell on me.

RODGERS

I won't Gramp, if you'll promise never to try this again!

ORGAN: Soft, mournful music....

GRAMP

I won't son. (PAUSE) You jist think I'm daffy. But I ain't. (HALTINGLY) Fer 20 years I bin waitin' fer the end. All I ask is to go in the fall, when the crops are in. This is the first time they wouldn't let me help, and I jist couldn't stand it. Don't say nuthin' I'll bide my time. I ain't mindin' the child, but I can't pick no more fer ye. My bag's by the road back of the corn crib. Go git it...(FADE)

ORGAN: SOFTLY BEHIND....

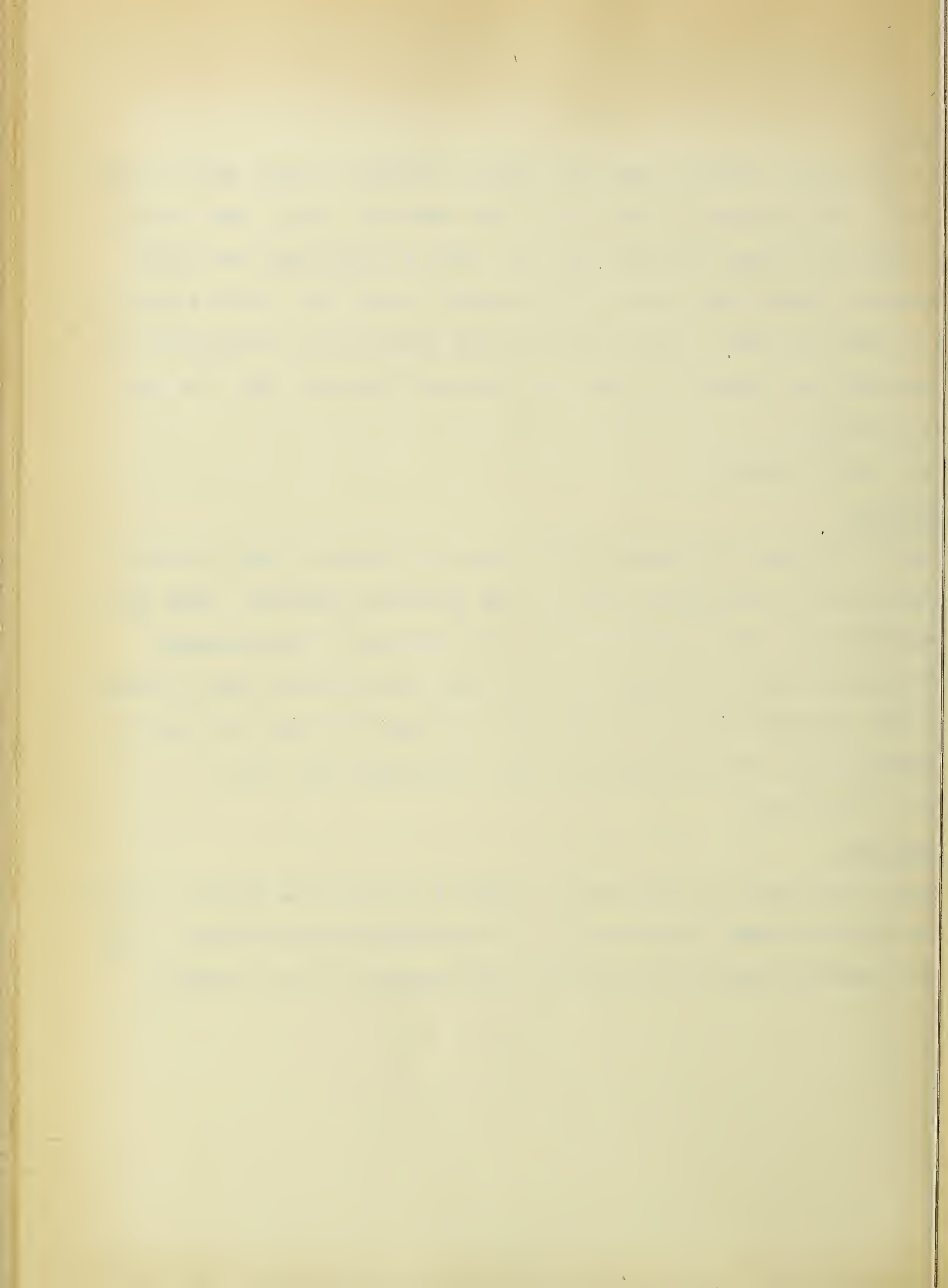
NARRATOR

That's the story I remember, every once in a while, when I think of those days of my boyhood, down in the Southern Piedmont. Long Gramp, rest his soul, was a great person. An illiterate but amazingly articulate man, he recited to me the saga of the white man's conquest of the Piedmont section of the south--a saga that today is one of conservation, of restoring the land, of holding this soil.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That's the story of Long Gramp, brought to you by the Nation's Station and the Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service. And now, speaking for the Soil Conservation Service, is Hal Jenkins.



JENKINS

Thanks, _____. First of all I want to thank Cleveland Rodgers and Russell Lord for permission to adapt this story of Long Gramp for use on this program. Cleveland Rodgers, a native of South Carolina and right now a member of the New York City Planning Commission, is writing a book, in which Long Gramp will be one of the principal characters. The sketch we adapted for our story today was published in the magazine, The Land, published by Friends of The Land, and edited by Russell Lord.

ANNOUNCER

Well, that certainly was a beautiful story, Hal. And now, what's new in the conservation world?

JENKINS

Ad lib news and comments to fill necessary time. And now, _____ if you please, "alter Lowdernilk's 11th commandment.

ANNOUNCER

"Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

